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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Vintage Sniper Rifle Teams in Theater

FROM: Match Director, FRC

DATE: 30 OCT 18

SUBJECT: Operations Order

1. Situation:
 - a. Enemy Forces.
 - 1) 7th Company 1044th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 232nd Division.
 - 2) Enemy is occupying fortified positions on the Riva Ridge with excellent observation, has mutually supporting fields of fire covering all possible routes of approach and is capable of strong resistance. The enemy has artillery support available and is expected to launch strong counter attacks.
 - b. Friendly Forces.
 - 1) Sniper teams will be in support of 1st Battalion, 86th Regiment, 10th Mountain Division.
 - 2) Company C, reinforced, 2nd Battalion, 86th Regiment will be attacking objectives on the left flank of the 1st Battalion.
 - 3) Three battalions of field artillery will be providing supporting fire if need and counter battery support once the objectives are taken.
 - 4) Seven .50 caliber machineguns, one platoon of tanks, and battalion 75mm anti-tank guns, 1 platoon chemical mortars.
 - c. Attachments and Detachments.
 - 1) Guides will be provided by the 10th Mountain Division.
2. Mission: From positions with elements of the 1st Battalion, 86th Regiment, sniper teams will locate and neutralize any enemy forces observed.
3. Execution
 - a. Concept of Operation.
 - 1) Scheme of maneuver. Two man sniper teams will assemble at the forward command post of the 1st Battalion, 86th Regiment, a structure referred to as the "Clubhouse" at 0800 hrs on 1 DEC 18 where guides will direct sniper teams to firing positions. One team will be deployed at a time. Snipers can expect to engage targets at 200, 300, 385 and 500 meters.
 - 2) Formation. Two man teams.
 - 3) Route. As directed by guide.
4. Service Support: None. Individuals will have to carry in all items required to complete the mission. Individuals should have snow camouflage available if needed. Each sniper will need a minimum of 20 rounds of ammunition.
5. Command and Signal
 - a. Signal: Contact Tom Reiten at 701-795-1988 or info@forksrifleclub.org
 - b. Command: Sniper Teams will follow directions of ROs and Match Director.
 - c. Challenge and Password: SLEIGHBELLS-RING

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Forks Rifle Club

Battle of Riva Ridge Rifle Match

December 1, 2018

Historical Background

The idea of mountain troops was brought to the attention of President Roosevelt in September 1940 by Charles "Minnie" Dole, founder of the National Ski Patrol. He and his team had reviewed information about all foreign mountain ski and winter troops and met with the President and General George Marshal to discuss their findings. It was not until October 1941 that the first mountain Battalion (the 87th) was activated at Fort Lewis Washington and began training at nearby Mount Rainier.

Realizing after Pearl Harbor that a larger organization would be required, Dole organized a civilian group to form Camp Hale in April 1942 near Pando Colorado (40 miles from present day Vail Colorado), with application for 7000 men to form what would become the 10th Mountain Division. On July 15, 1943, the 10th Mountain was activated, Brig. Gen. Lloyd E. Jones commanding, with the division entering the Italian theater of operations in September of 1944.

By January of 1945, command had transferred to Brig. Gen George P Hays. They had been issued heavy winter gear consisting of a pack weighing between 45-55 pounds containing four blankets (no sleeping bags) and later snow shoes. Their assignment was to capture Mount Belvedere, but to do that they first had to take Riva Ridge. Riva Ridge overlooked Mount Belvedere giving the Germans, and their artillery, a clear view of any advance on the peak and on Route 64 the main highway up the Po River valley.

The final preparations for assault on the Riva Ridge begin on February 12, 1945. The 4-5 feet of snow that had fallen in January had melted so climbing was easier than expected. On February 18th, 700 men of the 86th Battalion of 10th Mountain began the 2000 ft. climb up Riva Ridge in absolute quiet so as not to let the Germans know they were under assault and the Germans would remain in their warm dugouts. To aide the Americans, fog rolled in during the night so that by daytime on February 19th, the 86th Battalion held Riva Ridge and the 85th and 87th Battalions were able to successfully assault Mount Belvedere. German casualties were 213 killed, 782 wounded during the battles of Riva Ridge and Mount Belvedere.

The 10th Mountain continued the war in Italy until May 2, 1945, when German troops in that theater surrendered. The 10th Mountain was called back stateside to prepare for service in the invasion of Japan, but after Nagasaki this was not required. The 10th Mountain was inactivated July 1, 1948. It was temporarily reactivated during the Korean War and then permanently reactivated on February 13, 1985, at its current home, Fort Drum.

John W. Graves